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CZECHOSLOVAKIA

DESCRIPTION OF COUNTRY

Towns

STANDARD OF LIVING

Shortages

MORAL AND GENERAL MOOD

Entertainment

Anti-Communist Feelings

INDUSTRY

Heavy

RELIGION

Roman Catholic Church

EXILE

Anti-Communist Propaganda

RFE

A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF DEČÍN

SOURCE FRANKFURT : 49-year-old ethnic German who lived most of her life in DEČÍN with her old father.

DATE OF OBSERVATION : End of June 1953.

EVAL. COMMENT : It is pointed out that subsource had never worked in the factories under reference and, therefore, information about the production is very brief and cannot be taken for granted. Otherwise, the report seems to be authentic as far as the daily life and debasement of DEČÍN are concerned. According to this report the possibilities of any effective uprising behind the Iron Curtain are strongly handicapped by the lack of firearms.

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"Life as usual" might still be the slogan in DEČÍN - on the surface. There is still a population of 40,000, with only about 100 ethnic Germans. There are a number of large factories, and a lively omnibus and trolley car service carrying passengers every ten minutes to CROCHVICE, NOVÉ MĚSTO, BYNOV or STARÉ MĚSTO. An up-to-date line of buses provides transportation in the town itself going as far as VERNEŘICE, MĚRPOLICE and JANOV. DEČÍN is still the starting point for tourists wishing to visit the ČESKOSASSKÉ ŠVÝCARSKO mountains and plenty of trains service the city. Although source believes the number has been reduced since 1948 due to lack of coal.

But DEČÍN's former cleanliness and charm have departed and beneath the surface there are many changes. All too often to visitor is greeted by the sight of old junk heaps along the side walks, paper, bricks, iron and old bottles placed there by people still believing they are thus assisting the Communist regime. The Municipal Committee /Městská správa/, however, seems to think otherwise, and the junk often remains where it is for months on end.

DEČÍN has seven Catholic and one Protestant Church. People still like to go to church on Sundays despite Communist teachings but DEČÍN's seven Catholic churches labor under the handicap of having only one priest /NU/ and an 80-year-old clerical assistant /NU/. These unfortunate priests have to rotate all Sunday from one church to another, so that Mass was held in one church at 7 - 9 a.m., at the next from 10 - 12, and still the next from 2 - 4 p.m. and so on into the night. Even so, some of the churches always remain closed.

Although the last of their brethren, these two priests do not appear to meet any difficulties from the authorities. Source did not attend Mass herself as it was in Czech and she could not easily understand the language, but she was told that their sermons were always non-political.

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DĚČÍN has always been a city of gardens with many fruit trees; but although the gardens and fruit trees are still there the fruit is not for the DĚČÍN inhabitants. When gathered, it is transported at once to the SBĚRNA distribution center and from there to PRAHA.

Industry at DĚČÍN is concentrated in ROZBELES where, on both sides of the Ústecká ulice, there are the ŠKODA works, ČKD, KABLO, KOVOHUTĚ and ŠAMOTÁRNA, to give the factories the names by which they were known to the inhabitants. But source knows nothing about the work carried out in these factories nor the number of employees.

During the war the ŠKODA factory made cases for V2 missiles and tested the completed missile with compressed air. Source still remembers the whistling sound made by this test. She asserts that the same sound was still coming from the factory after 1948 and until 1951, and people at that time spread the rumor that the ŠKODA works were making some kind of atomic tests. Whatever the manufacture was, it was said to have been transferred to the USSR in 1951. However, source believes the atom story to be nothing but a rumor. All she knows about the factory is that it is seven stories high, that it is supposed to reach down to a dept of five floors underground and that it takes more than five minutes to walk from one end of the building to the other.

The ČKD factory made electric motors, KOVOHUTĚ steel wire, and ŠAMOTÁRNA manufactures ceramic bricks.

There are many movie theaters in DĚČÍN although source never visited any of them because she does not like movies. Source recalls that they were crowded to bursting point on the Sunday before the currency reform /Monday/ regardless of what film was showing, because people felt this was another way to get something for their money.

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Life was not "as usual" for source. Once owning and living in a three-storied house, she now lived with her seventy-year-old father in the basement. She had poor furniture and little money - only her father's old age pension which, after the currency reform, amounted to 370 Kčs. She did not try to obtain any work as both she and her father had been waiting already nearly two years for permission to return to Germany, and feared that if they were employed it would be much harder to obtain the permit to leave the ČSR. But poor though their circumstances were, they at least had a four-tube radio.

Source usually listened to RIAS, but did not have very good reception. As she speaks English she sometimes listened to the BBC but complained that these broadcasts were not of great interest to her as they were more concerned with the state of the British Empire than the state of Europe. She did not understand politics, but listening to the radio gave her the hope that one day the Communist regime would be overthrown. She knew about RFE, but as the broadcasts were in Czech she did not listen to them.

When the news of JATIS's release became known, people were pleased to hear that the USA would now resume relations with the ČSR. There was even a rumor that three shiploads of foodstuff were on the way to Europe destined for the ČSR.

The riots in East Germany on 17 June, evoked the hope in many people that now the ČSR might be able to join in the fight against Communism. The result of the uprising disappointed all those who hoped for an end to Communist tyranny, leaving them to sigh: "If only we would have had some weapons."

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